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PÆSTUM.

THE ancient town of Pæstum or Poseidonia was situated in Lucania, near the south-west coast of Italy, on the Gulf of Pæstum, now the Gulf of Salerno. The celebrated ruins, consisting of the remains of two temples, an amphitheatre, and another building, as well as the town, are about twenty-five miles south-east of Salerno. According to the reports of most travellers, the surrounding district is barren and deserted, owing to the unwholesomeness of the atmosphere, which is infested by exhalations from the stagnant marshes that abound in the lowlands. Others, on the contrary, maintain that there is more exaggeration than truth in these statements,—that the plain, though uncultivated, is naturally fertile, and that the neighbouring hills are covered with corn-fields and vineyards. But even these persons regret that measures are not adopted for getting rid of the reeds and brushwood which encumber the soil, and drying the marshes which fill the air with pestilential miasma.

feature in the scene represented in our engraving. The artist has there depicted the temple as, we have every reason to suppose, it appeared in its original state, and introduced various accessories which add to the general effect of the picture, without at all violating probability. The temple—as may be seen from our illustration—was one of the most magnificent in ancient times. The three steps, which form its pedestal, are well proportioned; the peristyle consists of six columns in front, six at the back, and fourteen on each side. The columns, like those of other temples, are very low, being only five times their diameter in height; but their arrangement at distances scarcely greater than the thickness of each, produces the happiest effect. There are two porticoes, one in the front and another at the back. In other respects the form of construction is exactly like that of all Greek temples. The columns, which are all fluted, have no base, and belong to the ancient Doric order. Hence it is, not without reason, conjectured that the temples of



THE TEMPLE OF NEPTUNE AT PÆSTUM.

What remains of the ancient Poseidonia is sufficient to give a good idea of the form of the town, which was an irregular square, from four to five miles round, on a perfectly level platform. The walls, which are almost entirely preserved in certain parts, were about twenty feet high and six feet in thickness. At regular intervals it was flanked with towers, and, like many Roman edifices, built of large masses of stone well fitted together, but without any kind of cement. The town had four gates opposite one another on the four sides. The principal one on the east side, now called the Gate of the Siren, on account of a small figure rudely sculptured above, looks towards Capaccio and the mountains. It is in perfect preservation and arched, but without any ornament. Close by was the aqueduct which conveyed water from the mountains to the town, and traces of which may yet be discerned.

The most interesting remains are those of the temples of Ceres and Neptune, especially the latter, which is both beautiful in architecture and well preserved. It is this which forms the principal

Pæstum were built at the period when the Greeks began to approach the perfection of architecture, and were preparing to give it that lightness and beauty of proportion which are not to be found in their heavy Egyptian models.

We will conclude with a few words on the history of Pæstum. It is full of obscurity, uncertainty, and conjecture, but the following facts may be safely admitted. Founded by a colony of the Greeks, Pæstum was near the famous Greek city of Sybaris, with which it was closely allied by many ties, and shared in those habits of luxury that have been ever since proverbial. The Romans took possession of it about 273 B.C., when they changed its Greek name Poseidonia to the Roman Pæstum, and made it a municipal town. From that time to the age of Augustus, when poets celebrated the beauty of its roses, which bloomed twice a year, it is rarely mentioned in ancient writings. It re-appears in history eight centuries after, when the Saracens, having conquered Sicily, wished to establish themselves in southern Italy; but the sons of Mahomet,

finding it impossible at the commencement of the tenth century to overcome the Christians, determined to retire from the country, and signalled their departure by pillaging and destroying Pæstum. In 1080, Robert Guiscard completed the work of destruction by conveying most of the remaining columns and ornaments to Salerno to build a church.

POLITICAL ASPECT OF CHINA.

BY WILLIAM KNIGHTON, M.A.

THE system of government, prevalent for ages in China, is based upon that of a family. The Chinese constitute the vast family of which the emperor is the father; and, as absolute filial obedience is required by their faith, as the father has absolute power over his children, even so has the emperor absolute authority in the state, the most implicit obedience being required from his officers and subjects. Such a system is often misnamed the patriarchal, but it is quite a misnomer—the foundation of both may be alike, but the practice is quite different. The emperor is styled “the sacred son of heaven,” “the sole ruler of the earth,” “the great father;” offerings are made to his image and to his throne; his person is adored; his people prostrate themselves in his presence. When he goes abroad, all the people take care to shut themselves up in their houses; whoever is found in the monarch’s way is liable to instant execution unless he turns his back, or lies flat with his face upon the ground. The children have evidently no reason to rejoice, under such circumstances, in the visits of their father; his journeys must be rather alarming to travellers. Everything about him partakes of the idolatrous homage paid to himself, whilst the mandarins, who are his delegates in distant provinces, have authority as absolute as his own.

No despotism was ever more unalloyed, no power more absolutely without control than that of this “son of heaven” and yet it was all based upon a mistaken view of the domestic relationship. The language, spoken and written, of China, is an admirably contrived supporter of this state of things; each sign representing an idea, often without any corresponding word, so that a piece of writing, although intelligible to the learned reader, cannot be read aloud to others; and hence the information acquired by the privileged classes has no means of becoming diffused amongst the bulk of the people. Reflection and memory are the only powers called into exercise by this dumb language—the imagination can never be appealed to by it. Even in a Chinese poem, which cannot, of course, be read aloud, the beauty consists in the adaptation of symbol to symbol; it excites no feeling in the breast, it affords no culture to the imagination. “Not a hundredth part of the Chinese characters,” says Remusat, “has any vocal expression, and it is no uncommon thing for the literati of that country to conduct their disputes by describing in the air, with their fans, characters which do not correspond to any word in the language which they speak.” (*Essai sur la Langue Chinoise*, p. 33.) Eminently absurd, we are inclined to call such symbolic argument, and to us it does certainly appear so; but it is eminently note-worthy, by reason of the deductions that may be drawn from the fact, that, if appeals are thus made to the reason and to the memory only, all the fervour of eloquence must be quite thrown away and all the aid of the imagination lost in religious or political addresses.

In the earliest ages of authentic Chinese history, that is, about five hundred years before the Christian era, the country was divided into nine sovereignties, all subsequently united under an enterprising prince named Lo, the Chinese Egbert. For centuries the country, thus united, enjoyed peace and prosperity under its native lords. The intestine tumults were few and far between, and the military art became almost unknown, for there was no foreign aggression to repel. Ghenghis Khan, the great Asiatic conqueror, swept over the country like a whirlwind, carrying everything before him in the thirteenth century; but the Ming or native dynasty was restored subsequently. About a century and a half ago, however, the Ming dynasty was again displaced by the Manchoo invaders from the north-east, whose monarchs have ever since sat upon the Chinese throne. The paternal rod by which China had previously been governed, was heavy and severe enough; but, since then, the whip of the Tartar has been added to the domestic tyranny, until subserviency has superseded obedience. “The despotism of the

Manchoo sovereign,” says Balbi, “keeps that of the grandes in order, and obliges them to remain united. There is no resistance on the part of the people; they have much cunning but little courage, and find it safer to preserve a part of their property by grovelling at the feet of their masters, than to risk the loss of the whole in order to obtain their liberty.” Had Balbi lived in these days, he might have learnt that, however bound down by a foreign yoke, however tyrannised over by foreign rulers, the Chinese had not yet lost their nationality entirely, and were certainly disposed to make a violent effort, and able to make it, to regain their liberty and to shake off the Manchoo rule. Whether they be successful or not remains to be seen—probably they will not be so; yet it must always be remembered, to their honour, that the attempt was made, and that they exhibited in it courage, constancy, and perseverance, not unalloyed, it is true, with cruelty and intolerance. But these are always the vices of the fallen; long-continued slavery produces them naturally in the mind; long-continued, pent-up indignation feeds itself upon blood when it gets the opportunity.

The various civil and military appointments are filled by nine classes of officers, called originally *mandarins*, by the Portuguese, from the Latin verb *mandare*, to command. The power of these officers is, as I have said, absolute, when they are sent by the emperor as his viceroys into the various provinces of the empire. An officer of this description entering a city, can order any person he suspects to be arrested and executed, without giving any further reason for the summary procedure than that noted in his despatch to the High Court of Peking, in which he announces the fact. He is unquestionably a formidable officer. A hundred lictors go before him, announcing his mission with discordant yells. Should any one be found in the way, notwithstanding this announcement, he is mauled with bamboo rods or castigated with heavy whips. It is some consolation to know that the officer himself, who thus has the power of tyrannising at his will, is liable to the same summary punishment he inflicts on others. If tales to his discredit are whispered by influential men in Peking, and come at length to the emperor’s ears, an imperial mandate may, at any moment, arrive, which orders the inferior officers to seize the viceroy, of whom they have been standing so heartily in dread, and to bastinado him soundly. It is likely, under such circumstances, that they would lay it on with hearty good-will.

The redeeming point of all this Chinese government must be mentioned, however. It is this, that these mandarins are not hereditary nobles, born to rule, and brought up in supercilious contempt of all around them, but men who have passed examinations in the classical literature of their country—men versed in such religion, in such mathematics, in such science, in such philosophy, as Chinese wisdom has attained to. Learning is the ladder of nobility, and he has a chance of climbing highest—other things being equal—who has learnt most. From their peculiar system of symbols, this learning, however, is not so powerfully operative for good as it might otherwise be. It is cold and heartless, cultivating the head much, but leaving the warm impulses of the heart unregulated, un nourished, and un replenished from the stores of the imagination. The human mind has many faculties, all of which require simultaneous development to constitute a superior being, ultimately. No one of these faculties can be neglected without evil being induced.

The insurrection which has been threatening for the last year or two to overturn the Manchoo dynasty, and once more place the native line of princes on the throne, excited little attention in England until the intelligence was brought by one of the Indian mails, last autumn, that Nankin had been taken by the rebels. Indistinct rumours of troubles in the southern provinces of the empire had been heard and canvassed in Canton months before. At first, the disturbers were *robbers*, and numerous imperial decrees declared that the leaders of these robbers had been seized, and quartered at Peking, their dismembered limbs being affixed on the gates, and elsewhere, as a warning to evil-doers. But still, all the imperial decrees notwithstanding, the troubles continued, and it was further rumoured, that the descendant of the old Ming family was the head of the insurgents. At length Nankin was taken, and the robbers became, forthwith, *rebels*. Nankin, the centre of the arts, fashions, and literature of China—Nankin, the old capital of the country, was taken. Europeans began then to doubt whether even